

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 CU-04 ACDA-19 AID-20 IGA-02 NIC-01 DRC-01

/134 W

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R 181020Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2459

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, BG

SUBJECT: POLICE FIRING ON OPPOSITION DEMONSTRATORS

1. ON MARCH 17 AN ATTEMPT BY THE OPPOSITION NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY (JSD) TO MARCH ON THE RESIDENCE OF THE HOME MINISTER RESULTED IN POLICE FIRING, WITH A MINIMUM OF THREE DEAD AND THE ARREST OF JSD LEADERS JALIL AND RAB. THE JSD HAS CALLED A NATION-WIDE HARTAL FOR MARCH 19 IN PROTEST. BOTH JSD AND THE AWAMI LEAGUE HKVE PUT PROCESSIONS INTO THE STREETS TODAY. THE JSD'S DACCA HEADQUARTERS WAS SET ON FIRE AT NOON, COINCIDENTALLY AFTER AN AWAMI LEAGUE GROUP PARADED PAST.

2. BECAUSE OF THE BDG'S FAILURE TO MEET THE JSD'S 29 POINT DEMAND BY THE MARCH 15 DEADLINE, JSD STAGED A MASS RALLY AT PALTAN MAIDAN IN DACCA YESTERDAY AND CALLED FOR GHERAOS (SIEGES) OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND INSTITUTIONS AND OF AWAMI LEAGUE POLITICIANS. AT THE END OF THE MEETING, JSD PRESIDENT M. A. JALIL EXHORTED THE FAITHFUL TO START THE CAMPAIGN BY GHERAOING THE RESIDENCE OF HOME MINISTER MONSOOR ALI. ABOUT 1830 HOURS, POLICE

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PROTECTING THE OFFICIAL RESIDENCES OF MINISTERS, MOST LOCATED

IN ONE AREA NEAR THE INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL, HAD OPENED FIRE ON THE PROTESTORS. WITH THE SHOOTING, THE CROWD BEGAN DISPERSING AND WITHIN AN HOUR THE DISTURBANCE HAD ENDED ALTHOUGH GUNSHOTS REPORTEDLY WERE HEARD LATER IN THE EVENING. ARRESTED AT THE SCENE WERE JALIL, RAB, AND 40 OTHERS. SOME REPORTS INDICATED THAT RAB RECEIVED A GUNSHOT WOUND IN THE LEG AND JALIL WAS BEATEN UP. THE OFFICIAL BDG PRESS STATEMENT SAID THAT THE PROTESTORS WERE ARMED AND OPENED FIRE, WOUNDING POLICEMEN AND REQUIRING RETURN FIRE. BDG SAYS THAT THREE DIED AND 18 WERE WOUNDED. PRESS REPORTS PLACE THE DEAD BETWEEN SIX AND EIGHT PEOPLE; JSD CLAIMS MANY MORE WERE KILLED. EMBASSY STAFF MEMBER CAUGHT AT SCENE SAW THREE BODIES PLACED IN A TRUCK BY POLICE. THERE ARE NO RELIABLE ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF DEMONSTRATORS INVOLVED.

3. COMMENT: THERE IS NO SIGN AS YET THAT YESTERDAY'S FIRINGS OR TODAY'S COUNTER PROTESTS HAVE AROUSED THE GENERAL POPULACE, ALTHOUGH THE EXTENT OF STUDENT REACTION IS STILL AN UNKNOWN FACTOR. PEPOL'S RESPONSE SEEMS TO BE ONE OF ANXIETY THAT VIOLENCE HAS AGAIN ERUPTED. THEREFORE, WE ANTICIPATE THAT TOMORROW'S HARTAL WILL BE OBSERVED, FOR PRECAUTIONARY REASONS PRINCIPALLY. THE SHOOTING INCIDENT YESTERDAY OVERSHADOWED THE NATION-WIDE CELEBRATION OF PRIME MINISTER MUJIB'S FIFTY-FOURTH BIRTHDAY.
NEWBERRY

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